

Please amend claim 8 as follows:

8. (Twice Amended) The device of claim 23 further comprising at least one instrument port located in the housing.

Please cancel claim 11 without prejudice.

Please amend claim 14 as follows:

14. (Once Amended) The device of claim 12 wherein each said suction port has a passage communication with a pressure conducting space on the interior of said block, respectively, and wherein the pressure conducting space has an inlet which is fluidly connectable with the vacuum line.

Please amend claim 17 as follows:

17. (Once Amended) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising:
accessing the surface of the heart;

providing an instrument comprising a housing having a bottom surface forming a complete ring shaped to engage a portion of the surface of the heart, wherein said housing comprises internal and external walls which extend from said bottom surface and converge toward one another to define an interior space which is radially inward of said bottom surface and at least partially covered by said internal and external walls, and further comprising means for introducing a negative pressure to the interior of said housing;

bringing said bottom surface into contact with said portion of the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure through said means for introducing a negative pressure; and

attaching said housing to said portion of the surface of the heart whereby said portion of the surface of the heart becomes fixed relative to said instrument.

Please amend claim 23 as follows:

23. (Once Amended) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: a housing having a bottom surface forming a complete ring shaped to engage the surface of the heart; a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing; and a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports, wherein said housing comprises internal and external walls which extend from said bottom surface and converge toward one another to define an interior space which is radially inward of said bottom surface and at least partially covered by said internal and external walls.

Please amend claim 24 as follows:

24. (Once Amended) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: first and second shafts joined by an articulating link; first and second suction port assemblies, wherein said first shaft is attached to said first suction port assembly and said second shaft is attached to said second port assembly; wherein each said suction port assembly is comprised of a block having a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in a bottom surface thereof, and wherein each said block is attached to a vacuum line.

Please cancel claims 25-30 without prejudice.

Please amend claim 31 as follows:

31. (Once Amended) The device of claim 23 further comprising at least one instrument port located in the housing.

Please enter the following new claims 41-43:

41. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: a semi-spherical shaped housing adapted to contact the surface of the heart on opposite sides of a target artery and having a bottom surface shaped to engage the surface of the heart, said housing

comprising at least one instrument port comprising means for attaching an instrument;

a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing; and

a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports.

42. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising:

a semi-spherical shaped housing adapted to contact the surface of the heart on opposite sides of a target artery and having a bottom surface shaped to engage the surface of the heart, said housing comprising at least one instrument port;

a magnetic locking mechanism on said at least one instrument port;

a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing; and

a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports.

43. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising:

a semi-spherical shaped housing adapted to contact the surface of the heart on opposite sides of a target artery and having a bottom surface shaped to engage the surface of the heart, said housing comprising at least one instrument port;

a suction-driven locking mechanism on said at least one instrument port;

a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing; and

a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports.

44. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: a housing having a bottom surface forming a complete ring shaped to engage the surface of the heart; a vacuum line operably connected to said housing to apply negative pressure to engage said bottom surface with the surface of the heart, wherein said housing comprises internal and external walls which extend from said bottom surface and converge toward one another to define an interior space which is radially inward of said bottom surface and at least partially covered by said internal and external walls.